3. *Peanut*, 1993

Lixenberg initially travelled to the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles on assignment for a Dutch periodical. Her brief was to capture rebuilding efforts in the wake of the protests that exploded after the brutal police beating of Rodney King in 1991.

The photographer, already familiar with the tired stereotypes propagated by the media, recognized that the reality of Watts was complex and she wished to do it justice with her camera. She observed that generally, “The media (were) like intruders,” adding “None of the media spent time there . . . They would interview people for two minutes, but only show little bits and pieces. No more than that.”

Here Lixenberg pictures a teenager who goes by the cute nickname Peanut. Peanut wears a solemn expression, but appears at ease with the photographer’s presence. Lixenberg shows us that he’s a serious individual, and also strong. She enhances the portrait with a keen eye for

geometry, carefully photographing him against a nearly symmetrical background. The vertical and horizontal lines behind Peanut contrast with the horizontal stripes on his shirt, as well as with his carefully delineated hairline. The short length of white metal functions as a prop for Peanut and also as a framing device.

Dana Lixenberg American Images

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